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CIA lets sun in but holds on to shade

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WASHINGTON — Our boss spy has embarked on an intriguing endeavor. He apparently intends to let enough sunlight penetrate the windows of the nation's intelligence apparatus so that once again the public will trust it to operate in the dark.

On television, they would call that Mission Impossible. But here in Washington, where they try the impossible every day, that is the invisible-ink message of President Carter's directive giving expanded authority over all U.S. intelligence-gathering to the new CIA chief, Admiral Stansfield Turner.

BY CENTRALIZING more power than ever in Turner, Mr. Carter is hoping to overcome some of the shortcomings of the past — the wasteful duplication of efforts among the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency and the National Reconnaissance Office, their jealous rivalry and absence of overall direction.

But the paramount reason is to prevent a repetition of the abuses and illegalities of the past; or, failing that, to at least make somebody responsible if they recur. From now on, the question of "who's in charge here?" can be answered. It is Admiral Turner.

Which is why Turner's *modus operandi* becomes so interesting. His premise seems to be that too much secrecy breeds too much suspicion. His contraceptive is sunshine. In the five months he has run CIA, Turner has done more to lift the veil than anyone else since the agency was created 30 years ago.

In former days, the view of the CIA could be obtained by a persevering reporter telephoning a certain CIA aide at a certain number. The opinion, of course, would be

off the record. Now CIA has an "office of public affairs," headed by retired Navy Capt. Herbert Hetu, an old Turner buddy. CIA's phone, of course, is listed in the phonebook.

When Turner first toyed with holding public tours of CIA, old agency hands were aghast. The notion seemed even more outlandish than the road signs on the George Washington Parkway that point out CIA's location at Langley, Va. But some of those who objected to the admiral's new spirit of openness are not working there any more.

Not so long ago, the appearance of a CIA director at a public hearing on Capitol Hill was so rare that reporters flocked to hear him. Nowadays, Turner shows up so often it is getting to be a bore.

Just this week, for example, Turner voluntarily agreed to notify 86 universities and corporations that they were involved — sometimes without their knowledge — in CIA's mind-control experiments of the last quarter century.

The other day, when Turner came to breakfast with a group of reporters, he brought along copies of a 30 page CIA report on Soviet economic prospects. The document says the Russians are not doing too well. Equally significant was Turner's open distribution of it.

All these things are small acts, to be sure, but they are clues to Turner's objective. He is trying to convince the public and Congress that the intelligence community no longer is the "rogue elephant" Sen. Frank Church complained about during his CIA inquiry last year. Gone are the days, we are told, when our intelligence agencies trampled on citizens' constitutional rights, invaded their privacy, drugged them — or covertly meddled in the affairs of other countries *a la* Cuba, Chile, Angola.

"I'm like a salesman," Turner told us. "I've got a product (intelligence data), and

I've got to get it to my customers (Mr. Carter, the National Security Council, congressional intelligence oversight committees)."

But like a good salesman, Turner is not baring all the secrets of his company. Congress is still being notified after — not before — a clandestine foreign operation is begun. And when it comes to Congress' publicly announcing the U.S. intelligence budget (estimated at about \$6 billion), "I won't object if they release one figure, but I'll scream if they release more than that," he said.

Turner likewise is turning edgy about intelligence leaks that appear in print. Media disclosure that Jordan's King Hussein was on the CIA payroll, he says, was damaging and has made it more difficult to recruit top-level foreign informants and to keep existing ones. To combat leaks, Turner disclosed the CIA is making surprise security checks on firms doing business with the agency.

SO, WHILE THE NEW BOSS of all U.S. intelligence is out to let the sunshine in, he clearly does not intend to let the secrets hang out. Which raises some questions about the purpose of the sunshine business.

- Is it just a public relations gimmick?
- A cover for what goes on in the back shop?

That kind of thing worked for the FBI during Hoover's heyday. But I have a hunch the public would prefer to be told, flat out, what it already suspects: Espionage is a secret business and sometimes a nasty business.

While the excesses of the past cannot be condoned and ought not to be repeated, the American public does not expect that the cloak has to be thrown out with the dagger.

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